

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T ATHENS 3680

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: MNUC, PARM, GR, US
SUBJ: GREECE AND THE NUCLEAR OPTION

REF: (A) ATHENS 3224, (B) ATHENS 3602

1. IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT ANDREAS PAPANDREOU'S CALL FOR GREECE TO ACQUIRE NUCLEAR WEAPONS (REFTEL B) IS A PASSING ISSUE. ON THE OTHER HAND, IN THE ABSENCE OF SOME INTELLIGENT COMMENTARY WITHIN GREECE AND SOME SERIOUS PRIVATE TALK FROM ABROAD, THE NUCLEAR TEMPTATION COULD GROW. MOREOVER, WE UNDERSTAND THAT GREECE IS AMONG THOSE COUNTRIES TECHNICALLY CAPABLE OF EVENTUALLY BUILDING A NUCLEAR DEVICE IF IT CHOOSES TO EXPEND THE NECESSARY RESOURCES.

2. THE UNITED STATES, WHICH IS NOW NEGOTIATING A LONG-TERM NUCLEAR COOPERATION AGREEMENT WITH GREECE, AND OTHER NATIONS HAVE A PROFOUND INTEREST IN DEMOLISHING THIS POTENTIAL DRAGON. WE SHOULD PENALIZE NEITHER THE CARAMANLIS GOVERNMENT NOR GREECE BECAUSE OF PAPANDREOU'S PRESENT STATEMENTS OR THE POSSIBILITY HE MIGHT SEEK

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TO DEVELOP A NUCLEAR ALTERNATIVE SHOULD HE BECOME PRIME MINISTER SOMETIME IN THE FUTURE. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE CAN SEEK TO STIFFEN AND ENCOURAGE THOSE OF OUR FRIENDS HERE WHO MIGHT UNDERSTAND THE RISKS TO GREECE AND TO THE REGION OF PURSUING A NUCLEAR OPTION. THUS FAR, OTHER THAN A RELATIVELY INEFFECTIVE CRITICAL COMMENT BY DEFENSE MINISTER AVEROFF (REFTEL A), THE CARAMANLIS

GOVERNMENT HAS NOT REPLIED TO PAPANDREOU. THE GOG'S NEAR SILENCE POSSIBLY REFLECTS ITS DESIRE TO AVOID OPENING UP HEATED PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF CONTROVERSIAL NUCLEAR TOPICS AND THE HOPE THAT PAPANDREOU'S RECENT INITIATIVE WILL SOON DIE IF UNCHALLENGED. IN PART, TOO, IT MAY REFLECT A BELIEF BY SOME THAT GREECE SHOULD NOT CATEGORICALLY REJECT THE NUCLEAR OPTION IN SPITE OF BEING AN NPT SIGNATORY. AVEROFF, INTERESTINGLY, DID NOT ADDRESS THE QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT GREECE SHOULD POSSESS NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN HIS REPLY.

3. IN ORDER TO PUT A BIT OF BACKBONE INTO THE GOG ON THIS SUBJECT AND TO REINFORCE OUR KNOWN POSITION ON NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION, IT WOULD BE USEFUL IF THE SUBJECT WERE BROACHED IN A FIRM BUT LOW KEY MANNER WITH THE GOG. WE SHOULD EXPRESS OUR FULL UNDERSTANDING FOR THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE POSITIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE OPPOSITION. NEVERTHELESS, WE SHOULD UNDERLINE THAT NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION SERIOUSLY CONCERNS US, AND WE WOULD NOT WANT SUCH A CALL FOR NUCLEAR WEAPONS TO GAIN RESPECTIBILITY IN GREECE, AN ALLY OF MANY YEARS AND WITH WHOM WE ARE NOW ESTABLISHING A LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP FOR PEACEFUL NUCLEAR COOPERATION.

4. IN DELIVERING THIS MESSAGE WE WOULD SUGGEST:

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(A) IT BE DELIVERED TO AMBASSADOR ALEXANDRAKIS AT AN APPROPRIATE TIME BY A HIGH LEVEL WASHINGTON OFFICIAL;
(B) THAT WE ENCOURAGE SELECTED ALLIES TO ECHO OUR VIEW, PARTICULARLY SINCE THE GOG MAY BE RECEPTIVE TO COMMENTS FROM ITS PROSPECTIVE EC PARTNERS; AND (C) THAT AT THE UPCOMING UN SPECIAL SESSION ON DISARMAMENT AND OTHER SUITABLE FORA WE AND OUR ALLIES REITERATE PUBLICLY THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION AND UNDERLINE THE CONSEQUENCES OF PURSUING SUCH AN IRRESPONSIBLE COURSE. PROPERLY DONE, THESE EFFORTS WOULD BE REPORTED IN THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS, BE REPRINTED IN GREECE, AND BECOME USEFUL TOOLS IN DEBUNKING PAPANDREOU'S ADVOCACY OF THE NUCLEAR OPTION FOR GREECE.

5. DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO PASS TO SECDEF AND ACDA.
MCCLOSKEY

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NNN

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